IMPORTANT FROM WASHINGTON

THE MASON-SLIDELL AFFAIR

ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER.

No Demand Yet Made Upon Our Government.

An Honorable Solution of the Question Predicted.

The Designs of the European Powers in Mexico the Cause of the Vlurry.

Decision of the Secretary of State in the Case of the British Ship Perthshire.

INDEMNITY AWARDED TO HER OWNERS.

The Bill Ordering Twenty Iron Clad War Ships Passed by the House,

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19, 1861. THE MASON-SLIDELL AFFAIR.

The mail bag containing the despatches from Minister Adams was placed in charge of Captain George Cook, of the Twenty-second Massachusetts Volunteers, at Boston, with a view of expediting its transmission to Washing-

ion. Captain Cook travelled with the Queen's messenger, Captain Seymour, by the Shore Line route from Boston to Now York, where they arrived more than two hours betime, and missed the connection. The English rer of despatches proceeded by special train. Captain Cock telegraphed Secretary Seward to know it

he should engage a special train, and received answer that it was not necessary. He arrived with his charge this morning, only a few hours behind Capt. Seymour. The atches were calmly received by the Secretary. They filled a large mail bag, and weighed one bundred pounds At New Haven there was great excitement at the depot when the train arrived. There was an immense crowd, curious to see the Queen's messenger, who was then fast

An absurd rumor was circulated to-day, that the gov ernment decided last evening to surrender Mason and Slidell. It is without any foundation whatever. Up to eleven o'clock to night Lord Lyons had made no

sation from his government to the President or Becretary of State relative to the seizure of the traitors Mason and Slidell. Mr. Adams, in his communication to Mr. Seward, gives a clear and detailed idea of the feel ing of the British people and the sentiment of British statesmen, but does not indicate that he knows the purport of the instructions of the English government to

Nothing contained in Mr. Adams' despatches indicate rament will make any exerbitant demand upor the United States relative to the seizure of the traitors. This s not only true, but I am permitted to announce, by high ity, that private letters received to-day government of Great Britain will not demand the release of Mason and Slidell, but will require an apology and such reparation as the United States can honorably grant. | guns. A short pause follows, and then there are four from Americans in London, who have facilities for learn ing something of the intentions of the British govern

The French Minister gave a dinner this evening. The British, Spanish, Russian and other Ministers were pre sent. In conversation the tables were rather turned upon the French Minister, that he had received no instructions from his government on the Mason and Slidell affair, since France was viewed as the chosen ally of England. This was pleasantly done, but the French Minister did not relish the joke.

The President has important private letters that will have great weight in the summing up of this traitorous moer, Chairman of the Committee on Finance,

interrupted the proceedings of the Squate to-day, by mov ing that the body go into Executive Session to consider important business communicated by special message from the President. The motion carried.

The message covered highly important documents con corning our foreign relations, but having no reference to the Mason and Slidell affair. It concerns the tri-partite expedition to the Gulf, which is after all of more importance to this government than everything else now agitating the public mind in this country. The message

The Mason and Slidell affair is only employed by the British government as a pretext, while the employ their forces in another direction to destroy our power and

THE CASE OF THE BRITISH SHEP PERTHEBURE THE forred so much of the President's Measage as relates to any claim of the British government on account of the ention of the skip Perthshire, have had the same un

ar consideration, and now report.

The President, in his annual Message, invited the ation of Congress to the correspon Britannic Mojesty's Minister accredited to this govern tion of the British ship Perthshire, in June lest, by th breach of the blockade. In the opinion of the Presiden hension of the facts, and as justice requires that w light, as sanctioned by public law, he recommended that appropriation he made to satisfy the reasonable and of the owner of the vessel for her detection.

hip Perthehire, belonging to Wm. Gray, was chartered ballast from Grimeby to Pensascia, and there load a cargo of timber for the United Kingdom, the charterer owever, having his option, through his agent at Pen scola, of ordering the ship to Mabile to load coston to Liverpool. The Perthshire sailed from Grimsby in March est, and on the 13th of May was making for the harbon ols, when she was boarded by an officer of the United States ship Sabine, and her captain was warned that Pensacola was blockaded, but informed that Mobile was not blockaded. The ship then proceeded to mobile, where she arrived on the 14th of May, twelve days before that port was blockaded, and loaded a cargo of

oction for Liverpool.

The blockade was established on the 26th of Map On met the party and released him. The calling returned

the 30th the ship left the barbor of Mobile, and wa boarded by an officer of the United States steamer Nia-gara, who passed her, by order of his superior officer, Captain W. W. McKean, United States Navy, as the fifteen days allowed by the President of the United States for

neutral vessels to depart had not expired.

The ship proceeded on her voyage until the 9th of June, when she was boarded and seized as a prize by order of Commander M. Smith, of the United States steamer Massa-chusetts, a prize crew was placed on board, and she was taken back to the blockading squadron. Captain McKean, the officer commanding the squadron stated to Command-er Smith that the Perthshire had left Mobile within the time allowed by the President's proclamation, and that he considered the capture illegal, as by order of the Navy Department no neutral vessel, not having on board contraband of war, was to be detained or captured unles attempting to leave or enter a blockaded port after the netification of blockade had been endorse

Captain Adams, of the Sabine, stated that at the time the Perthshire was boarded from his ship, and ordered off from Pensacola, there was no blockade of Mobile. Captain McKean accordingly directed Commander Smith to release the Perthshire, and to replace such provisions and stores as might have been used by the prize crew, which was done.

On the arrival of the Perthshire at Liverpool, Mr. Gray, her ewner, addressed a memorial to Earl Russell, her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: requesting his lordship, through the British Minister at ington, to bring the case before the government of the United States, and to present a claim for two hundred pounds sterling, being twelve days freight at the rate at which she was chartered. The claim was accordingly presented by Lord Lyons to the Secretary of State of the United States, who referred the subject to the Secretary of the Navy for information. On the receipt of a report of the facts in the case, Mr. Seward addressed the following

mg letter to Lord Lyons:—

DEFAURIENT ON STATE, WASHINGTON, Cet. 24, 1861.

My Lind—Your letter of the 11th of October last, presenting the claim of Mr. Wm. Gray, owner of the British ship Perthahire, for damages incurred by the detention of that vessel by the blockading squadron of the United States, was referred by me to the Secretary of the Navy for information upon the subject. I have now received the answer of the Secretary of the Navy terroupon, which fails to show me that the detention of the Perthalire by Commedore Smith, commanding the United States scamor Massachusetts, was warranted by law or by the President's preclamation instituting the blockade, although I am satisfied that that officer acted under a misapprehension of his duties, and not from any improver motive. It will belong to Congress for appropriate the sum of two hundred pounds, claimed by Gray, which sum seems to me not an unreasonable one. The President will ask Congress for that such instructions shall be given to Commodore Smith as will caution him against a repetition of the errors of which you have complained.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to your lordship the assurance of my high consideration.

WM. H. SEWARD.

Right Hon. Lord Lyons, &c., &c.

Right Hon. Lord Lyons, &c., &c. Or these facts the committee report a bill for the payment of the sum claimed by the British government behalf of Gray, and recommend its passage.

RESOLUTION OF SENATOR TEN EYER RESPECTING THE The resolution offered by Senator Ten Eyck, in relation

to the war, is as follows:to the war, is as follows:—
Resolved, That the present war is for the Union, according to the constitution; that its object is to save the former and enforce the latter; was so an the beginning, is now as carried on, and should be so to the last; that measures extreme and radies!, disruptive in themselves, involving in a common fate as well the loyal as disloyal, should not be resorted to; and that in crushing treasen, widespread and hateful as it is, the government itself cannot prove traitor to organic law.

FIRING OF A REBEL BATTERY ON THE POTOMAC. A new rebel battery on the Potomac, opposite Rur A new rope: cattery on the retomac, opposite Kun-Point, consisting of three guns, one of which is a sixty-four pounder, opened fire last night. One of the shells carried away the corner of Clemens' House, and two fell into the camp of a New Jersey regiment on the Maryland, neither of them exploding. The last shot was fired about twelve o'clock last night.

AFFAIRS ON THE LOWER FOTOMAC -- SHARP PIRING PROM THE REBEL BATTERIES -- NARROW ESCAPE OF THE RELIANCE. The Potomac correspondent of the HERALD makes the

UNITED STATES STRAMER YANKES, OFF MATWOMAN CREEK, POTOMAC RIVER, Dec. 18—7 P. M.

At sundown this evening the United States steame Reliance, Acting Master Harrison, left her moorings in this neighborhood, in order to pass the robel batteries, with the view of communicating with the lower fiotilla. Shortly after she left the moon rose, throwing a faint light over the river. The rebel batteries at Opossom's Nose have just opened fire. Three bright flashes of flame are seen, succeeded by as many loud reports from heavy show a clean pair of heels, or she is liable to be crippled, if not sunk; but Captain Harrison ha taken the precaution to have as much steam up as his engineers can produce, and the rebels must fire brisk! o keep pace with her. They seem to understand it, for now the lightning-like flashes and the mimic thunder of what Mrs. Partington would correctly enough call th Maryland shore, and exhibiting a momentary gleams followed in a few seconds by a sharp report, indicating that they have exploded. None are seen to explode over Reliance has run the gauntlet unharmed, though it is possible that she may have been struck by solid shot or unloaded shell. Still the Reliance continues har onward course, under a full head of steam, and still the batteries continue to pour out streams of fire from their guns. Battery after battery opens. Shipping Point is reached, and the iron messengers of death con-tinue to be sent after the little vessel. The roar of the cannon is nearly continuous, intermingled with the shrift whistle of the shells as they cut through the evening air Though the Yankee is six or seven miles from the batter that first opened, the concussion of the atmosphere causes a perceptible tremer on board this vessel. The batteries at Chapawamsic creek, the lowest along the line, now open. Several more rounds are fired, and at half-past seven o'clock the firing ceases, after twenty, seven shells have been thrown. One of the engineers has just descended to the wardre intimated that the Reliance has blown her whistle twice. This proves that she has not been sun! it is improbable that she is seriously injeced. She had not neturned the fire, as that would only tend to still more

from the Maryland shore. A few minutes clause and the compliment is returned by two more guns from Shipping Point batteries.

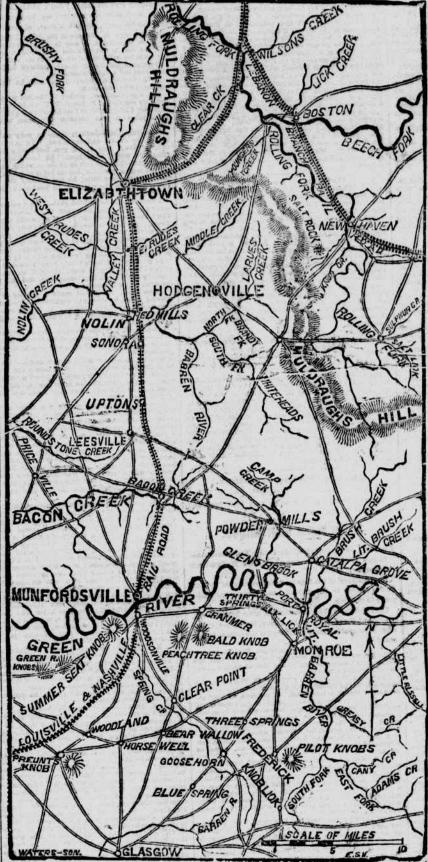
plainly expose her position.

This afternoon the new battery at Ceckpit Point fired two shots from a heavy gun, it was supposed at a brig that lay at the engrance to Matawoman creek, a little above Stump Neck. Captain Eastman sent the Murray down to tow the brig further up out of range, which was done, the battery at Cockpit Boint did not open on the Reliance. THE TRIAL OF COLONEL KERRIGAN.

The trial of Col. Kerrigan was resumed to-day. Capt Ferguson, of Company H, Eventy-fifth regiment, testified that he had seen the accessed leave-the camp at various times since it was in Virginia, and that he was not generally in full uniform. He heard the Colenel my that he had received a letter from Lieutenant Fay, of his regiment who had been taken prisoner. The Colonel said Fay was hard up and wanted fifteen dollars. Witness asked the and he replied that he would attend to it; that Fay had been an officer in the regiment, and should not want for money. The accused did not tell witness how he received the letter from Fay (it will be proved that this letter was taken to the camp in the mail bag). On one occasion witness rode out with some German riflemen three miles beyond our lines, and after returning stated in conversation with the Colonel his belief that he had been further into the enemy's country than any other officers is the regiment. He described some land-marks on the route, and the Colonel said he had been still farther. Witness said that in this conversation both of them were, perhaps, speaking in bravado. Evidence was also put in to show that on one occasion a captain of a picket post arrested a toligate keeper and sent him to

THE FIGHT AT MUMFORDSVILLE.

Positions of Gen. McCook's Forces at Mumfordsville, Kentucky, and Gen. Mitchell's at Bacon Creek---Progress of the Advance from Muldraugh's Hill, &c., &c.



mained there. The same day the pickets in that neigh-berhood were surprised, and a sergeant captured in a tree. The Court adjourned to Friday morning.

THE CASE OF COLONEL HALSTED. Colonel Wm. Haisted, of the New Jersey cavalry, was tried to-day by court martial. The automore of the charge was that be drew commutation for forage for five horses, and also drew forage in kind, thus defrauding the government of eighty dollars. The evidence was ver reak, and Colonel Halstead will undoubtedly be acquitted. He submitted a written defence, during the reading

ARRIVAL OF CAPT. EIGENTS FROM RICHMOND—HIS REPORTS OF THE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS THERE. Capt. Jos. B. Ricketts, with his heroic and devoted wife, arrived in this city to-day and are staying with their relative, A. J. Palmer, of the corps of Topographical Engineers, United States Army. Capt. Ricketts, at the head of his battery, at Bull run, received a serious wound in his left leg, from which he has not recovered. His good constitution and temperate habits, and the attendance of his wife, have enabled him to endure the pain and withstand the effects of any in-jury by which the principal bone of the limb was shattered. While confined as a prisoner of war in Rich-mond Hospital Captain Ricketts is exchanged for Captain Julius D. Laguel, who was taken prisoner at Rich Mountain, and arrived yesterday at Fortress Monroe. His exchange was effected with difficulty, as the rebels justly Ricketts graduated at West Point in 1829, and has been Washington, after having made a gallant fight, his bat-tery having been retaken three times. Still a captain, while some of his juniors by some ten years are brigadier

with Captain Ricketts and his lady, but they seemed in-clined to withhold information respecting affairs in Virginia, probably from a fear that any revelations the might make would prove injurious to prisoners left behind them. From other sources, however, we learn various ates are not rose colored just now. The verest effects. Many staple articles of living are scarce that they command ruinous prices. Salt is ex-tremely dear; tea costs four dollars per pound, butter seventy-five cents, cotton thread is twenty-five cents a speol, and sewing silk cannot be had. So pressing are the wants of the people in Virginia for articles of prime necessity that the news from England respecting the capture of Mason and Slidell was received with spasmo joys. The rebels began to predict immediately after the avaloit of Commander Wilkes that it would produce a they now feel confident of such a result.

much softened by the prospective good that would flow from it through the hostility of England. The promptitude which Jeff. Davis is furnished with

nformation from the North is surprising. On Sunday night he was awakened by a messenger, who informed ham of the news received by the Europa and Capt. Soy mour's arrival. The messenger almost forced his way into Davis' residence to convey to him the welcome intelli gence He receives a copy of the New York Heral, every day, and it is said that he and his Cabinee were much annoyed by the correct report of the state of the The accuracy of the statements was acknowledged.

hatchie creek, in South Carolina. General Pemberton is

there. The Eleventh Alabama regiment was lately sent of the sickness among there from Centerville on account of the sickness among officers and mon. Nine thousand of their men are lying sick in the public hospitals of Richmond, besides large umbers in private hospitals and private houses. The earthworks at Richmond are still without cannon

by the appointment of General Heath to supercede Genemade by Davis, but he was compelled to retract it. The other returned prisoners are Rev. Mr. Mines, of Grace church, Eath, Me., Chaplain of the Second Maine

regiment and two boys, named Thomas Wilkinson and Charles Smith, sons of officers in General Signies' brigade. Chaplain Mines expresses his acknowledgments for kind treatment from General Winder, the commandant at Richmond, and Captain Gibbs, commandant of the Port. He represents the prisoners as much in need of clothing. The Massachusetts men had received a the others from the United States government. Since cold weather set in three or four deaths per day result from the insufficiency of clothing. For a large portion of the time Mr. Mines was not allowed to visit the sick privilege of the prison was allowed him.

Onn Thursday night a meeting of the Richmond Prison Association was held in honor of the departure of their Sergeant at-Arms. The President, Hon. Alfred Ely, expressed the belief that he would be next one released. The chiert of this association is to extract consolation out of

A MATINEE DANSANTE TO CAPTAIN GRIPPIN AND HIS

The officers of Griffin's Battery are to give Capt. Griffin and his bride a matinee dansante. Nearly two hundred invitations have been issued. It is expected that the leading officers of the army and the elite of this city will ARMY ORDER RELATIVE TO PASSES.

The following order was published yesterday:—

HEADQUARTERS ARM OF THE POTOMAC,

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14, 1861.

It has been represented to these headquarters, that individuals from without the lines of this army hucksters,
&c. pass within the lines, and are allowed to cross again
to their house. Division commanders will issue strin
gent instructions upon this subject, to the end that no
person coming within the lines of the army shall be permitted to return beyond them without proper authority.

By command of Major General McCLELLAN.

8. WILLIAMS, Assistant Adjutant General.

THE CANVASS CHAPEL OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
MINTH REGIMENT.
The Ninth Massachusetts regiment yesterday put up on
their grounds a fine canvass chapel sixty-five by thirty feet. It is to be dedicated, with appropriate exercises on Sunday. It is tastefully constructed, and becample room for the entire regiment.

The Joint Committee to inquire into the conduct of the war consists of Senators Wade, Chandler, and Johnson of Tennessee, and Representatives Gooch, Covode, Julian

Major General Butler arrived here last night MOVEMENTS OF COMMODORE WILKES. Commodora Wilkes visited Congress to-day and was

THE ABOLITION OF THE FRANKING PRVIILEGE. The bill abolishing the franking privilege, reported by Mr. Colfax, from the Post Office Committee, and which was postponed till the second Thursday of January. abolishes all laws authorizing letters or public documents to be sent free, but provides that all who are now entiprepayment, as aoldiers' letters are at-present, the postage to be paid by the resipient; speeches to be carried fo

within two thousand miles, making the postage on an agricultural patent report five cents, and on volumes of the size of the Congressional Globe ten cents. The estimated increase of revenue is \$1,000,000.

PENALTIES FOR FRAUDS ON THE POST OFFICE. The Post Office Department will rigidly enforce the aw against counterfeiting the handwriting or frank of any person entitled to the franking privilege, or causing the same to be done, in order to avoid the payment of the postage. The penalty is a fine of \$500. Franks are being fraudulently used and sometimes forged and sold o soldiers and other persons.

RELEASE OF MUTINOUS MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK THURTEENTH REGIMENT. Twenty-seven insubordinate members of the New York

Thirteenth, who for two months past have been con in the central guardhouse, have been released and sent to their regiment in Virginia. They all come to the deci sion to be hereafter faithful to duty.

CONSULAR RECOGNITION.

The President has recognized Carl Friedrich Adac, of Cincinnati, Consul for the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz for the Western States of America. THE NEGRO POPULATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

As the subject of abolishing slavery in the District of

Columbia is now agitated, it may be of general interest to know that, according to the recent census, the number of slaves in Georgetown is 577, in Washington 1,744, and in the remainder of the county 834-making a total of 3,185; free blacks in the Fistrict 11,121, and the total population of Washington is 61,122.

THE DRAD I ETTER OFFICE. The bill which passed the House to-day for improving the efficiency of the Bead Letter Office, provides for twenty-five additional clerks, at \$800 each ralary, to neace with the recommendation of the Postmaster General; to return all dead letters to their willers, and not valuable letters alone, as now. By the estimates of the department at present of the postage rates, the recipts on these returned letters would exceed the cost of

The bill reported from the Post Office Committee creases the postage on returned money letters to treble, and on all other dead letters returned to double the ordinary rates, still further increasing the surplus,

the required clerks \$13,000 a year.

THIRTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

Senate.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19, 1861.

THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVEP. Mr. Sumner, (rep.) of Mass., presented petitions name pensation to loyal masters.

PETTION FOR GEN. FREMONT'S PROMOTION.

Mr. Wane, (rep.) of Ohio, presented a petition from tizens of Ohio, asking that John C. Fremont be appointed a Licutement General.

TERCH OF MR. WILLEY, OF VIRGINIA, ON NATIONAL AFFAIRS Mr. William, (Union) of Va., offered a resolution that he existing war was forced upon the country by the States in rebellion without provocation, which was designed to destroy the Union and constitution, and their
purpose was to disavow and repudiate the fundamental
principles of a republican government. He proceeded to
-peak at some length on the resolution, contending that
the rebellion was perfectly angustiable. In no country
was lite more secure and civil and religious liberty more
perfect. The country had been in unexampled prosperity,
and especially was the South favored, and there coasequently could be no grievance as to the cause of the rebellion, as a Virginia Senator and slaveholder had declared that the South always got what was demanded.
He commended the precluration of those generals who
had declared that it was not their intention to interfere
with legal institutions, and expressed his gratification
that the President is his Message had re-declared fidelity
to the constitution. He declared that by no efforts
of his should slavery be extended, though he
believed it necessary for the present that the
African race should be kept in bendage. He gave a brief
sketch of the rise of secession, and categorian that the
result of a long concerted conspiracy, as avowed by
the leaders of the rebellion. He argued at some length
against the dectrine of secession, and contended that the
real cause of secession was hostility to the democratic
principles of republican government.
Without finishing, Mr. Willey gave way to a motion for
an executive session. States in rebellion without provocation, which was de-

A throat missing, ar. Whiley gave way to a metion for an executive segment.

The addition of the House to adjourn until the 6th of January was taken up.

Mr. Carter, (Union) of Va., moved to amend so as to adjourn on Monday next.

Mr. Bayann, (opp.) of Del., said:—As the resolution read only referred to the House, he moved to amend so as to include both houses, and that they adjourn from Menday next to the 2d of January.

Mr. Wade, (rep.) of Ohio, opposed the adjournment, and moved to lay the subject on the table.

Motion fout by ayes 17, mays 19.

Mr. Freseners (rep.) of Me., moved that the subject be postponed until Menday.

Mr. Freseners moved to postpone the subject until to morrow.

Mo quorum voting on this motion, Mr. Fosier, (rep.) of moved that the Senate adjourn The motion was carried.

House of Representatives. WASHINGTON, Dec. 19, 1861.

THE COST OF ARMY TRANSPORTATION On motion of Mr. ARNOLD, (rep.) of Ill., it was re solved that the Secretary of War be requested to furnish the cost of transportation of arms, ordinance and munitions of war to that portion of the country west of the Alleghanies since May last, and give, as far as practicaa detailed statement of the places from which they were transported, and the cost, and whether by rail or

handred dollars bounty to the soldiers at the expiration

The bull to amend the act of July lost—which grants one hundred deltars bounty to the solders at the expiration of two years, and to those somer honorably discharged by reason of wounds and disabilities, so as to extend its provisions to those who entered the service under the less processions to those who entered the service under the less processors to the processor of the provisions to the processor.

Mr. Shavers, trep. of the President and were similarly disqualified—was, after debate, ladd on the babe.

Mr. Shavers, trep. of the form the Committee on Ways and Means, reported a bull making an appropriation for the construction, present various and repair of fortifications and works of defence. Referred to the Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union.

PARSAGE OF A BILL PROVINCE OF TRENTY BON-CLAD STRAM GENOMES.

The House resumed the consideration of the bill providing for constructing twenty iron-clad steam gunboats, to be built by contract or otherwise, as the Secretary of the Navy may deem best for the public interest.

Mr. VALAARDEHAM, (opp.) of Ohio, offered and advocated an amendment providing that the new gunboats shall be constructed at the public navy yards as far as practicable, or by private contract, after giving ten days notice for proposals, published in the papers of New York, Poston, Philadelphia and Baitimore.

Mr. Shogwick, (rep.) of N. Y., in explanation, said that these vessels are to be built on a plan entirely different from those already constructed. The details and specifications he would deem it imprudent to disclose, even if he had the means. The plan was well considered by a committee of mayl officers.

Mr. VALLANDEHAM incidentally said, in the course of his remarks, that, rather than yield the principles which we have held for years, he was propared to meet the combined botthing of the whole world, and this he believed was the sentiment of the entire American people.

Mr. Showmittee of nevel of the third American people.

Mr. Showmittee of nevel of the third American peop

bined bostlity of the whole world, and this he believed was the sentiment of the entire American people.

Mr. Ssnowna said that the Pensacola was one of the beautes of building by private contract, which was leas satisfactory and economical than those constructed at the government yards. He (Sedgwick) did not believe that a foreign war was pending; but if it was so, he hoped that the question would be met in a proper spirit. There was no insuit of which Great Britian could complain to justify war. The vessels now proposed to be constructed were not for service abroad, but at home, to put down the rebellion. rebellion.

Mr. Vallandigham's amendment was disagreed to, and
the bill passed.

the bill passed.

THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

Mr. COLFAX, (rep.) of Ind., from the Comm
Post Office, reported a bill to promote the effic
Ped Latter Office, based on recommendatio
Postmaster General in his annual report.

Postmaster General in the same of the bill was passed.

In curry as to congressive holding office.

On motion of Mr. Washerene, (rep.) of Ill., the Committee on Elections was instructed to inquire and report whether any person holding office under the United States and receiving compensation as a member of the House.

ber of the House.

THE CAPITOL AND TREASURY EXTENSION CONTRACTS.

A resolution was passed directing an inquiry into the building of the Capitol and Treasury extensions; whether the contract is being faithfully performed, and whether the work cannot be done at less expense to the govern-

ment.

Mr. Colfax reported a bill abolishing the franking privilege, the consideration of which was poetponed until the second Tuesday in January.

THE CONSTLAR AND DIFLOMATIC APPROPRIATION SHALWAS considered and passed.

INVESTIGATION ENTO THE COST OF TRANSPORTING TROOPS. On motion of Mr. Holman, (opp.) of Mich., a resolution was adopted instructing the select Committee on Contracts to inquire whether the transportation of troops by railroad was by special contract or otherwise, &c.; and calling-on the Secretary of War to furnish all orders relative to the transportation of froops and magnitions of war. Adjourned.

NEWS FROM GENERAL BANKS' DIVISION.

IMPORTANT FROM THE UPPER POTOMAC.

Spirited Engagement at Point of Rocks.

The Rebels Defeated and their Cannon Destroyed.

&c.

POINT OF ROCKS, Dec. 19, 1861.

At ten o'clock this morning a rebel battery of three guns, flanked with about two hundred infantry, suddenly commenced shelling the encampment of Colonel Genry's Pennsylvania regiment.

About twenty shells, well aimed, fell amidst the encompment—the first within a few feet of Licatement Colonel de Kerponay, commanding. The six companies

in camp were well deployed and intrenched. The Twenty eighth regiment battery opened fire with two guns, the first shot disabling one of the rebel guns,

the second falling in their centre. Our battery then advanced and poured a continuous tire into them, silencing all their guns and driving back a fourth one reinforcing them.

The rebels were driven from their position in full retreat. There were at least fourteen killed, and many

wounded. Our side did not lose a man. The engagement lasted over naif an hour

After the rout of the rebe's the victors turned their guns on some houses near the Old Furnace, on the Virginiv side, where about 150 robels were secreted, driving then out, killing and wounding many. The guns were ad

IMPORTANT FROM KENTUCKY.

Probable Battle Between the Armies of Gen. Schoepff and Gen. Zollicoffer.

CINCINNATI, Dec. 19, 1861. The Commercial's Frankfort despatch says advices from omerset state that yesterday morning at daylight Gene ral Schoepff, with all his force, marched out to attack the

General Zollicoffer is in position on Fishing creek with 6,000 men and some artillery. General Schoepff's force consists of two Tennessee regiments, Haskin's Kentucky regiment, and the Seventeenth, Thirty-first, Thirty-fifth and Thirty eighth Ohio regiments, Standart's Ohio and Heintt's Kentucky batteries of ten guns, four of which are rifled, four smooth bore and two Parrott guns. General Zollicoffer has no wagons on this side of the river,

and but indifferent means of crossing.

General Schoepff was confident of whipping him, with some hope of capturing most of his men. The Ter

It is probable that the battle took place yesterday or

THE RECENT FIGHT IN KENTUCKY.

The Brillianf Defeat of Three Regiments Companies of Union Troops-The Rebels Retreat and the Union Troops Hold Their Ground-Our Map of the Vicinity-Description of Mumfordsville and Neighborhood, &c.

The recent official report from General Buell to the headquarters at Washington, sent by telegraph, gives us some few particulars of the brilliant resistance made by four companies of the Thirty second Indiana Volun-teers against a vastly superior rebel force under Colonel

One regiment of Texan Rangers,

One battery of six guns, cupied a point in front of the railroad bridge across The attack was made by the rebels at about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 17th inst., and after a brief strug-gle, during which they lost Colonel Terry, of the Ramers be, with thirty-three others, being killed, and abo t fifty others wounded—they ingloriously retreated. The Un

The following compose the field and staff officers of the stated, were actually in the fight, under the com

THIRTY-SECOND INDIANA VOLUNTEERS. entenant Colonel

.. Rev. Emil Beschsoff. The regiment is locally known as the First German reon some portion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad,

By a glance at the map which we present to day, the progress made by the Union troops in their advance upon Bowling Green is at once apparent. At the top of the map is that portion of Muldraugh's Hill first taken possession of by the rebels, and since regained by the Unionists ville and Nashville Railroad takes place here, and the

ourse it is now in the right hands. Following the railroad track, the next points of importance are Elizabethtown and Nolin, both places often mentioned in the present struggle. A short distance further on is Upton station, doubtless named after the noted secessionist, Mrs. Upton, who has caused some little trouble already to the government. The next place of importance is Bacon creek, at which place Gene ral Buell reports the division under General Mitchell, of astronomical fame. Following the line of railway for six miles only, the scene of the recent fight is reached, where

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF MUMFORDSVILLE AND VICINITY.

Mumfordsville, the capital of Hart county, is situated on the right or northern bank of Green river, and is seventy four miles from Louisville. The rivor is navigable for small steamers during part of the year. It has a population of about 800. Near this town is a remarkaa population of about 800. Near this town is a remarkable spring, which is connected with a millipond, the waters of which, at about twelve o'clock each day, rise twelve or fifteen inches, overflow the dam and recede to their ordinary leyel with all the regularity of the tides. Six miles cast of the "war is a hole shaped like an inverted cone, seventy roet in diam." Are at the top, but diminuted to ten or twelve feet at the depth of about thirty roet. A stone thrown into this hole rumble, down thou sides without returning any sound indicating its "Aving touched the bottom. In the same visinity, near the "90 or an elevation called the Franchman's Knob, commences a hole or sink, which has been descended 275 feet by means of a rope, without indica bottom. The wonder ful Mammoth Cave is only a few miles from this town.

THE MAMMOTH CAVE.

One of the important points in the neighborhood of Mumfordsville is this Mammoth Cave; and who has no eard of it? In the extent and number of its chambers heard of it? In the extent and number of its chambers in the length of its galleries and its variety of interesting objects, such as streams, mounds, staicaties, stalag-mites, &c., it has no equal. Among its productions are quantities of sallpetre. It is said to have been explored ten miles (part of that distance is a beat on a deep river inhabited by a white, opeless fish) without giving any indications of coming to a termination. At the largest end of what has been considered the longest avenue of the cave, there is a pit, dark and deep, and terrible, known as the muelstrom. Tens of thousands have gazed into it with awe, while Bungal lights were thrown into it to make its fearful depths visible; but none ever had the daring to explore it until very recently.